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Stylus

The Mystic Tower

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A Fragment of

The Vision of Sheikh Haji Ibrahim of Kerbela

Index created by Darcy John Bouchard, li Exouile



Front Cover Illustration
Hans Sebald Beham: Mors ultima linea rerum [La mort est la dernière limite des choses] (1529)
Death is the line [Death is the last limit of things]

Vignette
Alfred Rethel's "Triumph of Death"

The Mystic Tower

This intricate allegory is included in Fairfax Cartwright's "The Mystic Rose from the Garden of the King."

A Fragment of "The Vision of Sheikh Haji Ibrahim of Kerbela" (1898)

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Satan, *en route* from Hell to Earth, encounters two strange figures guarding the Gates of Hell:

Before the gates there sat on either side a formidable Shape. The one seemed woman to the waist, and fair, but ended foul in many a scaly fold, voluminous and vast - a serpent armed with mortal sting. [...] The other Shape - if shape it might be called, that shape had none distinguishable in member, joint, or limb. Or substance might be called that shadow seemed, for each seemed either. Black it stood as Night, fierce as ten Furies, terrible as Hell, and shook a dreadful dart.

Synopsis of Milton, "Paradis Lost," Book Two, lines 648-672



Illustration Verso

“*Satan, Sin and Death*”
William Hogarth
Engraving (circa 1735-40)

Rapunzel

Brothers Grimm

Translated & edited by Darcy John Bouchard, *li Exōūile*



Once upon a time there was a man and a woman who had long wished for a child but had never received one. Finally, however, the woman came to be with child. Through the small rear window of these people's house they could see into a fairy sorceress' splendid garden that was filled with the most beautiful flowers and herbs of all kinds. The garden was surrounded by a high wall, and no one dared enter, because the fairy *that* it belonged to was a sorceress who possessed great power and was feared by everyone.

One day the woman was standing at this window, and she saw a bed planted with the most beautiful *rapunzel* - its leaves were used like spinach, and its parsnip-like root was used like a radish. It looked so fresh and green *that* she longed for some. It was her greatest desire to eat some of the rapunzel. This desire increased with every day, and not knowing how to get any, she became miserably ill.

Her husband was frightened, and asked her, "What ails you, dear wife? Why are you doing so poorly?"

"Oh," she answered, "if I do not get some rapunzel from the garden behind our house, I shall die."

The man, who loved her dearly, thought, "Before you let your wife die, you must get her some of the rapunzel, whatever the cost."

So, one evening, just as it was getting dark he climbed over the high wall into the fairy sorceress' garden, hastily dug up a handful of rapunzel, and took it to his wife. She immediately made a salad from it, which she devoured greedily. It tasted so very good to her that by the next day her desire for more had grown threefold.

The man saw that she were to have any peace, would have to climb into the garden once again. So he thought to climb back into the garden. Thus, he set forth just as it was getting dark. But no sooner than he had climbed over the wall than, to his horror, he saw the fairy sorceress standing there before him.

She scolded him fiercely for daring to enter her splendid garden intent on stealing her rapunzel: "How can you dare," she said, giving him an angry look, "to climb into my garden and like a thief to steal my rapunzel? You will pay for this."

"Oh," he exclaimed, excusing himself as best he could with his wife's pregnancy, and how it would be dangerous to deny her anything. "Let mercy overrule justice. I came to do this out of necessity. My wife saw your rapunzel from our window, and such a longing came over her, that she would die, if she did not get some to eat."

Finally, the fairy sorceress' anger abated somewhat, and she said, "If things are as you say, I will accept your excuse and allow you to take as much rapunzel as you want. But under one condition: You must give me the child that your wife will bring to the world. It will do well, and I will take care of it like a mother."

In his fear the man agreed to everything.

When the woman gave birth, Frau Gothel, as the fairy sorceress became known, appeared, named the little girl Rapunzel, and took her away.

Rapunzel became the most beautiful child under the sun... but when she was twelve years old, Frau Gothel locked her up in a tower that stood in a forest which had neither a door nor a stairway, but only a tiny little window at the very top.

When Frau Gothel wanted to enter, she stood below and called out:

"Rapunzel, Rapunzel!
Let down your hair to me."

Rapunzel had long, splendid hair, as fine as spun gold. When she heard the Frau Gothel's voice calling out, she would undo her braids, wind her hair around a window hook, and let her hair fall twenty yards to the ground, - so that the fairy sorceress climbed up it.

One day, a few years later, a young prince came riding through the forest where the tower stood. As he approached the tower, he heard a song so beautiful that he stopped to listen. It was Rapunzel, who was passing the time by singing with her sweet voice... and he fell in love with her.

The prince wanted to climb up to her, and looked for a door in the tower, but none was to be found. Because no ladder tall enough to reach her could be had, he fell into despair.

He rode home, but the song had so touched his heart that he returned to the forest every day and listened to it. One time, as he was thus standing behind a tree, he saw the fairy sorceress approach, and heard her say:

"Rapunzel, Rapunzel!
Let down your hair to me."

Then he witnessed Rapunzel let down her strands of hair, and the fairy sorceress climbed up them to her. Then, he knew how he would get him into the tower: "If that is the ladder into the tower, then sometime I will try my luck."

He remembered the words that he would have to speak, and the next day, just as soon as it was beginning to get dark, he went to the tower and called out:

"Rapunzel, Rapunzel!
Let down your hair to me."

The hair fell down, and the prince climbed up.

At first Rapunzel was terribly frightened when a man - such as she had never seen before - came in to her. However, the prince began talking to her in a very friendly manner, telling her that his heart had been so touched by her singing *that* he could have no peace until he had seen her in person. Then, Rapunzel lost all her fear, and when he asked her if she would take him as her husband, she thought, "He would rather have me than would old Frau Gothel." She said 'yes' and placed her hand into his, saying "I would go with you gladly, but I do not know how to get down. Every time that you come, bring a strand of

silk, from which I will weave a ladder. When it is finished, I will climb down, and you can take me away on your horse." They arranged that he would come to her every evening, for old Frau Gothel came by day.

Frau Gothel did not discover what was happening until one day Rapunzel said to her, "Frau Gothel, tell me why it is that my clothes are all too tight. They no longer fit me."

"You godless child," cried old Frau Gothel, "you're pregnant. How is this possible?"

Rapunzel knowing only honesty told her all about the young prince who visited her.

"What am I hearing from you?" Frau Gothel screamed, "I thought I had removed you from the whole world, but you have deceived me nonetheless."

In her anger, she grabbed Rapunzel's beautiful hair, wrapped it a few times around her left hand, grasped a pair of scissors with her right hand, and snip-snip, cut it off. Then she was so unmerciful as to send Rapunzel away alone into a wilderness where she suffered greatly and where, after a time, gave birth to twins, a boy and a girl.

On the evening of the same day *that* she sent Rapunzel away, old Frau Gothel, the fairy sorceress, tied the cut-off hair to the hook by the window, and when the prince called out:

"Rapunzel, Rapunzel!
Let down your hair to me."

she let down the hair.

The prince climbed up, but above, instead of his beloved Rapunzel, he found old Frau Gothel, the fairy sorceress, who peered at him with poisonous and evil looks.

"Aha!" she cried scornfully. "You have come for your Mistress Darling, but that beautiful bird is no longer sitting in her nest, nor is she singing any more. The cat got her, and will scratch your eyes out as well. You have lost Rapunzel. You will never see her again."

Then, Frau Gothel, the fairy sorceress, poked at his eyes with her scissors, and, as he stepped back away from her, the young prince fell out the window from atop the tower. Yet, he escaped with his life.

Sorrowfully, he wandered blindly about in the forest, eating nothing but grass and roots, and doing nothing but weeping and wailing over the loss of his beloved wife. Thus, he wandered about miserably for some years, finally happening into the wilderness where Rapunzel lived with the twins *that* she had given birth to.

He heard a voice and thought it was familiar. He advanced toward it, and as he approached, Rapunzel recognized him, and crying tears of joy, threw her arms around his neck.

Two of her tears fell into his eyes, and they became clear once again, and he could see as well as before. He led her into his kingdom, where he was received with joy, and for a long time they lived happily and satisfied.

Illustration Verso

"Rapunzel"
by Walter Crane

From "Household Stories from the Collection of the Brothers Grimm."
Lucy Crane, translator. Walter Crane, illustrator. London: Macmillan & Co., 1882.

The Mystic Tower

This intricate allegory is included in Fairfax Cartwright's "The Mystic Rose from the Garden of the King."

A Fragment of "The Vision of Sheikh Haji Ibrahim of Kerbela" (1898)

In my wanderings in the **Strange Land** this did I see:

A **Temple built like a Tower**, rising to a great height, surrounded at its base by a circular colonnade.

Impelled by desire to learn, I knocked at the **Gate of the Temple** and prayed for admittance. A venerable old man - the **Sage of that Temple** - opened the Gate and said to me, "What seekest thou?"

I replied, "Knowledge."

He said, "Hast thou the strength and determination to climb to the topmost chamber of the Tower!"

I said, "The desire have I if thou wilt be my guide to show me the way."

Then he stretched out his hand and raised me up, saying: "If thy heart is stout, cross the threshold of the **Temple of Human Knowledge**."

I seized the proffered hand, and with the Sage I passed under the mighty **Gateway of the Temple**. When I had entered the precincts of the building, I saw that a stately colonnade ran in a circle round the **triangular Tower**, which seemed to rise to a giddy height above me; and presently as I looked I perceived that the wall behind the colonnade was covered with **representations of human figures**, and my Guide spoke: "Behold, the **Cycle of Human Life**! See Man as he appeareth to the human eye!"

The First Picture

Then I looked again, and I saw that the first picture, by the **Entrance Gate**, represented the **Childhood of Man**, and the **Angel of Life** was drawing back **the Veil**, beyond which lay **the World** with all its dangers and possibilities, and the children full of joyance were marching forward to enter the **Promised Land**; but I saw that there was a look of pity on the face of the Angel, for in the darkness by the Veil crouched the figure of **Satan**, marking with his claws upon the sand the number of those whom he would devour. And as I gazed longer at the children, I began to perceive that **each child represented some type of Humanity**. There I saw **the young King** approaching the Veil with firm step, but with awe upon his face, as he gazed upon that unknown World which he would be called upon to govern, and by his side was a **youth with vicious face and envy in his heart**, seeking to push aside the young King that he might enter first into possession of the World. Many children I saw bubbling over with the exuberance of youth, pleased with what lay around them, and looking not far ahead into that mysterious World which was being disclosed to them. One maiden I noticed gazing earnestly at the **Star of Love**, which from above shone down upon the **World of Youth**, and another maiden - in whom was the **Soul of the wanton** - was bending down to the ground to pluck a rose, and in her haste to seize it a thorn had pricked her finger.

I followed my Guide around the colonnade, and at each step I saw the same children grown older - having advanced a little on the **Journey of Life**; and I saw many fall by the way, and when I came to the last picture I saw that few were left - **the ascetic Dervish**, worn and emaciated - **the man who had sought for God through the Spirit** - and **the aged King**, full of gravity - **the man who had sought for God by striving to act according to his lights in the World**; loneliness was around these two, but they heeded it not, and behind the throne of the King stood, with her arms crossed and on her face a look of impenetrability, the Angel of Life, now changed into the **Angel of Death**.

Saddened by what I had seen, I withdrew from the colonnade, and in 'the sunshine of the pleasant garden' round the base of the Tower I sat for a long while meditating on the vanity of human existence.

Then my Guide touched me upon the shoulder and said: "Thine eye hath seen but the **outer shell of Humanity**, and thou art depressed thereby. Seekest thou now to know what hath been revealed to the **Soul of Man**, and what are the **limits of Human Knowledge**?"

I replied: "I am willing, for my heart thirsteth for Knowledge."

My Guide with his wand touched **a small and hidden door** in the rugged walls of the triangular Tower, which opened and admitted us; then he turned to me and said: "The Tower is high and it containeth seven levels, and on each level are three Chambers, and above all lieth one Chamber, and the ascent thereto is long and wearisome."

I replied: "My Master, thy footsteps will I follow."

Then we began **the ascent**, and when we had reached **the first level** my Guide turned to me and said: "Behold **the First Chamber**!"

The First Chamber

A heavy veil closed the entrance; my Guide pushed it aside and we entered within the Chamber. There we found ourselves in darkness, and awe seized me, so that I poured my Soul out in prayer, craving in humility of spirit for illumination. And when I had been there some time I lifted up my eyes, and it seemed to me that my head was encircled by soul-inspiring light, while my feet remained lost in the **darkness of Unreality**; and my **Intelligence** was quickened by a message from above, and I knew that the **Soul of Man** - the reflection of the Unity - is suspended between the Light and the Darkness, and through the opposition of the Light and the Darkness the Soul of Man gains **consciousness of the Unknown** which veils the **Eternal Unity**. And the mystic symbol of the Unity shone forth upon the walls of this Chamber.

The Second Chamber

When I retired my Guide led me to the **Second Chamber**. There I saw **a stately Woman** deeply veiled, wearing on her head a crown with the crescent moon at top, and on her lap lay a great book closed. With deep respect I prostrated myself before her, saying: "teach me, thou noble woman, that I may learn."

She replied: "I am the Recipient - the Passive; I am the complement of that which thou hast seen in the First Chamber. I am the Link between the Unity and Man. I am the Holy Sanctuary. I hold the **Book of Knowledge** which he can only read who has the power to lift my veil." And as I contemplated her more steadfastly I saw that her veil grew dimmer-and-dimmer, until for an instant I beheld **the beauty of her face**; then she vanished from my sight.

The Third Chamber

My Guide then seized my hand and bade me follow him to **the next Chamber**. When I had penetrated through the veil which closed the entrance, again I saw a throne upon which **a Woman** was seated, **clothed in Majesty**, and wearing the **Crown of Authority**. By her side was an **Eagle**, and above her was a canopy which seemed to be formed of the **Wings of Angels**.

When I had made obeisance to her, she opened her lips and said: "I am **the termination of the First and the Second**; in me is the

Equilibrium completed. I am the **Law of the World**; with my **Sceptre** do I govern it. With one hand do I draw down the **Spirit** and with the other do I raise up its **Negation**, and in my Womb is Man conceived.”

When with my Guide I had issued from the last Chamber, he bade me for a while to meditate on what I had seen; then he led me up a steep flight of steps to the **Second Level of the Tower**. When we had reached it he said to me: “We have now attained to another plane of thought, to another aspect of things. Enter now the **Fourth Chamber** which lies above the First Chamber below.”

The Second Level of the Tower

The Fourth Chamber

I did as I was bidden, and when I had penetrated into the Chamber I beheld a **King upon his throne**, and before the **Majesty of his face** I prostrated myself. Presently I heard him say: “I am not the **absolute Absolute**; I am for Humanity the **Realization of the Absolute**; I am the **will of the Unity**; my **Sceptre** is the **sign of Power**; with it I rule Mankind, for my Law shall be **God’s Law**; to me man must turn for all that relateth to the World in which **Iness** moveth.”

The Fifth Chamber

Then I withdrew from the presence of the King, and followed my Guide into the **Fifth Chamber**. Here likewise I beheld a man seated upon a throne, but he wore not on his head the crown of a King of this World but a **Mystic Sign**, and he was arrayed in the **white robes of Sanctity**. And these words he spoke to me: “Kneel and worship, for I am not a King of this World; my **Sceptre** is the **Sign of Authority**; with it I rule the **Souls of Men**. I am the **Voice of the Law of the Spirit**. I am the **bond of Reunion between man created and the Breath from which his creation proceeded**.”

The Sixth Chamber

When he had ceased speaking, with awe in my heart I withdrew, following my Guide to the **Sixth Chamber**, which lay in the **third angle of the Second Level of the Tower**. When I had entered it I found myself in darkness, but gradually a dim light seemed to descend from the summit of the Chamber, and it grew in intensity, and when I looked up I beheld with astonishment as it were the **Eye of a Spiritual Being** looking down upon me.

Then my Guide said unto me: “Behold the **Eye of the World!** Through it the mind realizes the **Beauty of the Manifestation of the Unity** - through it **Love** reaches the **Soul**, bringing Man and Woman to the **completion of their Manifest Destinies**. Learn and understand the Mystery of this Sign. This is the Point from which **two Roads diverge**; along the one descends the **Spirit of Light**; along the other descends the **Spirit of Darkness**.”

The Vision faded from my sight, and meditating deeply on what I had seen, I followed my Guide, who led me out of the Chamber.

The Third Level of the Tower

The Seventh Chamber

With my Guide I began the ascent to the **Third Level of the Tower**, and when we had reached it we entered together the **Seventh Chamber**, which lay above the **Fourth Chamber** and the **First Chamber below**. Therein I saw nothing for a time; then I heard the “**whisper**” of an **arrow**, and beheld in the misty distance a **noble stag** struck down by it. Looking round, there appeared to me the **majestic vision of a man**, radiant like a conqueror, holding in his extended hand the **bow of**

Power from which the arrow had been discharged. He said to me: “What seest thou?”

I said: “I saw the weak overcome by the strong.”

He said to me: “Behold, I am the **Man Conqueror**; **Man as the Emblem of the Creator**. I am **more than Nature**, I am **Nature illuminated by the Spirit of the Eternal**, and therefore do I overcome mere Nature.”

The Eighth Chamber

When this Vision had disappeared from my sight, I passed with my Guide to the **Eighth Chamber**. Herein I saw a **Sword standing unsupported on the point of its hilt**, and in astonishment I exclaimed: “What meaneth this Sign!”

My Guide replied: “Between Man and Nature a permanent struggle exists; what man attaineth by labour he loseth again if his labour should cease. This is the **Sign of Equilibrium, the balance between opposing Forces**, between Good and Evil in the Created World. This is the **Sign of the Spirit of Justice** which with the **Power of the Sword** separates the opposing combatants.”

The Ninth Chamber

When I had gazed for some time upon this symbol, I proceeded to the **last Chamber** on this Level of the Tower, which was the **Ninth Chamber**. When the veil by the entrance had fallen behind me, I found myself face-to-face with **an aged Dervish**, whose countenance was serene and radiant; for him age seemed to have no afflictions, and Wisdom shone forth from his eyes. In his right hand he held aloft a burning lamp, and in his left hand he held a staff, on which he leant. I saluted him with reverence, and he addressed me thus: “When I was young I selected the **Path of Light**, and my reward has been great. **Wisdom** have I imprisoned in the lamp which illuminates my **Path**. Round my Soul have I drawn the **Mantle of Protection** which shall ward off Evil when it shall assail it. This staff of strength have I found upon my path, and on it I can lean with security in the ascent towards Truth.”

The serenity of this old man filled my Soul with elation, and the **glow of Divine Love** seemed to penetrate into myself like a precious gift from his presence.

The Fourth Level of the Tower

The Tenth Chamber

When I issued from the last Chamber I followed my Guide up the ascent to the **next Level of the Tower**, where with him I entered the **Tenth Chamber**, which lay above the **Seventh and the Fourth and the First Chamber below**. Here I beheld a **Circle turning upon no visible axis**, and my Guide said to me: “Behold the **Symbol of Eternity**, the **Symbol of the incessant action of Time**. The Circle is ever moving; it ascendeth and descendeth; so ascendeth the **Spirit of God** to the summit, so descendeth the **Spirit of Evil** to the abyss; yet the Circle is unbroken: so from Good the descent to Evil is possible, so from Evil the ascent to Good is possible. This is a **Chamber of Equilibrium**. Below in the **Seventh Chamber** hast thou seen the Conqueror - the Holder of Power, the Symbol of Creative Force. In the Chamber above thou shalt see the Symbol of Destruction. Here thou seest the ascent and the descent, yet the Circle is one and unbroken; but a vaster Circle existeth which the eye of man cannot see; it turneth-and-turneth through Eternity without ceasing; the **Spirit of Creation createth**, and the **Spirit of Destruction destroyeth**; and the Circle is the Equilibrium without which there would be no **Manifestation of the Unity**, and if there were no Manifestation of the Unity the Unity would be dead and Unconscious of Himself.”

The Eleventh Chamber

When my Guide had ceased speaking he led me to the *Eleventh Chamber*, and there I saw a *Virgin* standing before me *radiant in all the splendour of youth and strength*. With a voice which had the ring of silver without tremor and without fear she spoke to me thus: "In me lies hid the *germ of Vitality*. To thee my hand seems weak, but strength lieth in the Spirit, and because *my heart is pure*, know I no fear, and with my foot do I curb the Dragon beneath me."

It was so sweet a vision that it made my heart leap with joy, and when it vanished from my sight, pensively I followed my Guide to the *Twelfth Chamber*, with my mind still full of the beautiful young Virgin who had appeared to me.

The Twelfth Chamber

In this Chamber I found myself in *complete obscurity*, but as I gazed into the darkness a sign appeared to me by degrees in the form of a Cross.

My Guide said: "Behold the *Sign of the Revealed Law*; out of the Darkness it proceedeth, and Man must bow to it."

As I gazed more intently, the face of a man seemed to appear to me enclosed by a triangle hanging downwards at the base of the Cross, and I marveled and exclaimed: "What meaneth this transformation!"

My Guide replied: "Woe unto the man who filled with Pride which presumeth to rebel against the Revealed Law, for on him waiteth destruction. Vain is it of Man to seek to rebel against that which the *Eternal* hath revealed unto him; by submission he will rise, by rebellion his face will be turned away from the *Light*, and his advancement delayed."

When my Guide had ceased speaking, we left the Chamber and proceeded to ascend to the *Fifth Level of the Tower*; there we entered together the *Thirteenth Chamber*, and this Vision appeared to me.

*The Fifth Level of the Tower**The Thirteenth Chamber*

A *luxuriant meadow* spread out before my eyes like the plain of the World; it was filled with variety, and the luxuriant flowers nodded to each other in their joy of existence. Presently, however, the breath of winter approached and its icy blast chilled my Soul; and as I gazed I saw the *Vision of Death* looming up before me; in one hand he held a scimitar, and in the other an empty basket; and he mowed down the flowers and threw them into the basket; and it seemed to me that they turned into dead men's heads; and some wore crowns and others the humble hood of the Dervish; and some had the golden hair of youth, and others the whitened locks of old age. And in my fear I cried aloud: "O Terror of the World! what art thou?"

And a Voice replied: "I am the *Link between the Known and the Unknown*. That which seems gold in the World I will turn it into base metal, and that which seems base metal I will turn into gold. As the Ocean dissolveth and absorbeth the *Salt of the World*, so do I, for I am the *Solvent of Humanity*, and out of that which is do I make that which shall be."

When the Voice ceased, the Vision of Death departed from me, and I saw again the green meadow filled with flowers.

Then my Guide said to me: "The *Spirit of Life* is the antagonist of the *Spirit of Stagnation*, for *Stagnation is the Negation of Life*. In the Unity nothing is created, nothing is destroyed. To the Sage, therefore, **Death hath no terrors**, for he knoweth that without Death there could be no Life, without Darkness no Light, without the Negation no Manifestation of the Reality. **Death is the Key which opens unto Man a further stage on the Path of the Manifestation of the Unity.**"

From this Chamber my Guide led me to the *Fourteenth Chamber*, where I saw before me *an Angel who poured out of a pitcher into a receiver beneath the Water of Life*.

The Fourteenth Chamber

My Guide said to me: "The meaning is this. In the World in which thou livest, the mind perceiveth the *existence of Individuality*, which is caused by the Water of Life descending in varying degrees into Matter, its Opposite. Now the Angel, when fertilizing the World by pouring upon it the Water of Life, giveth unto Man the *conception of justice*, which is to be the Light which is to guide him upon the path through the *Material World*. The Angel whom thou seest is, *therefore*, the *Emblem of Temperance*, which is the principle which should govern the individual creature in the World."

Then with my Guide I proceeded to the last Chamber on this level of the Tower, which was the Fifteenth in Number.

The Fifteenth Chamber

Here I found myself in *complete darkness*, but presently out of the *profundity of the gloom* glowed forth the *Beast of Evil*, the *Dragon biting his tail*.

Seized with fear I clung to my Guide, who threw around me the *Mantle of Protection*, and said: "Behold the Sign! This is the *Circle of Evil*. Woe unto the man who steppeth into the *shadow of the Light*, for the gloom shall grow greater-and-greater, and against the *fatal power of the Dragon's Ring* man's will struggleth in vain. Who falleth into the Magic Circle him no regrets can avail, for an Eternity seemeth to separate him from the *Path of Reunion*."

Overcome with dread, I issued from the last Chamber, and began the ascent to the next Level of the Tower, where when I had reached it I entered with my Guide the Sixteenth Chamber.

*The Sixth Level of the Tower**The Fourteenth Chamber*

Here I saw before me a *Tower of great strength*, and the *Master of the Tower* and his attendants were enjoying their security behind the battlements of their stronghold.

And I said to myself: "So cunning seemeth to have been the skill of the *architect* that this Tower will not perish but with the destruction of the World."

But presently I heard a great roar, and I beheld a *thunderbolt descending from a cloud*, and it struck the mighty Tower, and the battlements parted asunder, and the Master and his attendants were hurled to the ground.

In amazement I exclaimed: "What meaneth this Sign?"

My Guide replied: "Behold the *Sign of the Fall*! Man who was Spiritual has entered the World and put on the burden of the material body. Behold the *Symbol of the Spirit of the Unity*, which to thine eyes is invisible, incarnated in the World which lieth open unto thy senses."

The Seventeenth Chamber

When the Vision had passed away I followed my Guide to the *Seventeenth Chamber*, and as I entered it I felt the *Breath of Spring* upon me, and my heart, which had been saddened at the sight of the ruined Tower, leapt for joy; and as I looked I saw before me the *Vision of a lovely maiden, and her golden tresses were crowned with a diadem of seven stars*; she sat in the midst of a green meadow enameled with the glory of flowers, and by her side was a fountain from which poured forth the *pure Water of the Earth*.

Presently, the lovely maiden opened her lips and spoke, and my Soul was so stirred, that tears flowed from my eyes for joy of the *softness of her voice*, which was like the *music of a harp in the stillness of the night*. And she said: "I am the *Voice of Hope in the World*. I am the *Eternal Youth of Nature*. In the depth of the Material World lieth hid the Water which welleth up in the *Fountain of Immortality*. The *Glory of the Sun* have I absorbed in my golden tresses: from my diadem of stars do I draw down the *Spirit* into the *Body of Man*; into his fallen Soul I breathe the *Hope of Redemption*; through me cometh to man the Courage to struggle against the bondage in which he is placed."

I tarried long in contemplation of this beautiful Vision, until my Guide with his *wand of Power* caused it to vanish; then I followed him to the last Chamber on this Level of the Tower, which was the Eighteenth in Number.

The Eighteenth Chamber

Here, I found myself *again in utter darkness*, but after a few moments I heard my Guide saying to me: "Watch, and thou shalt see."

Then I gazed again into the gloom, and there grew before me a Vision which filled my Soul with despondency, for it seemed to me that I saw the World spread out before me, illuminated only by the *pale and sickly light of the Moon*; and man was struggling against man, and wild beast against wild beast; and the reptiles of the Earth came out of their hiding places to gather their spoil. And in my sorrow I exclaimed aloud: "What meaneth this Sign?"

My Guide replied: "This is the *last Term*. This is the *ultimate descent of the Spirit of the Unity into the depths of the Abyss of Negation*. This is the *Realm of Chaos in the World... the Kingdom of the Passions let loose*. This is the *Triumph of Matter*, Matter absorbing the Spirit and on the verge of throttling it."

The sight of this Vision inspired me with so great a terror that my eyes had no tears to weep, and I felt as if a mountain of Matter were piled upon my Soul to crush it, so that beneath the strain my mind gave way and I fell back in a swoon into the arms of my Guide. When I recovered the use of my senses the Vision had departed, and *like a child I was led without this Chamber of Despair*; but when I sought to begin the ascent to the next Level of the Tower, my Guide checked me and said: "Ere we proceed any further pause and reflect. Thus far hast thou ascended through *Six Levels of the Tower*, and thou hast visited *Eighteen Chambers therein*. Now this is the meaning of what thou hast seen. In the *first Six Chambers* thou hast gained **Knowledge of the Principles of the Universe**; in the *next Six Chambers* thou hast moved in the *World of Law* and gained **Knowledge of the Spirit of Preservation**; in the *last Six Chambers* thou hast gained **Knowledge of the World of Facts**. The total which thou hast seen hath had this for meaning: 'the *Breath of the Unity* descending towards the *Abyss of Darkness*; what thou shalt see now is the *Yearning for Reunion* raising the Spirit of the Eternal back to the Unity from which it proceeded."

When he had spoken thus my Guide led the way up a long flight of steps, narrow and steep at the beginning but broadening out and more easy as we advanced, and when we had reached the top of them we found ourselves on a *higher Level of the Tower*, and here we entered the *Nineteenth Chamber*.

The Seventh Level of the Tower

The Nineteenth Chamber

Here at first I saw nothing, but surrounding me lay as it were a *shapeless mist permeated by a vivifying luminosity*. Presently, in the uniformity of the mist I saw as it were a *germ forming, a point of condensation*; gradually it assumed a more definite shape, and then it appeared to me like a *pure crystal of salt suspended in the Ocean*.

Then the crystal vanished slowly, and through the spot where it had been I saw the hills forming; then they became more distinct and I saw the shapes of trees appearing, and flowers of every hue, with butterflies and insects buzzing among them, and the fishes were leaping in the rivers; and as I marveled the *glory of the Light* broke through the mist, and I saw beneath me a *lovely Garden* in which the *children of men, youths and maidens*, played among the flowers, rejoicing in the *gift of Life*.

Then I heard my Guide exclaim: "Behold, the *Spirit of the Eternal* through the Chaos of the Material World hath reached to the *Manifestation of Humanity!*"

When the Mist began to close round me again I followed my Guide to the *Twentieth Chamber*.

The Twentieth Chamber

Here I saw spread out before me the *Field of Solitude - the Burial Place of Humanity* - and no living thing stirred therein and no noise was known to be. And as I gazed upon the *waste of Life* I heard the sound of a great trumpet, the voice of *Israfel*¹ calling to Humanity. And I saw in the centre of the *Field of Solitude Azrael* - the *Angel of Death* - sitting in meditation; and at the sound of the trumpet he rose and flapped his sable pinions like a tired bird about to retire to his rest, and then he drew his great wings around his form, for the *sleep of Eternity* was upon him. And in the Field of Solitude I saw the graves open and the dead rising therefrom, and the rending of their grave-clothes was like the roar of the sea seeking to break down the barrier of the land.

My Guide seizing my trembling hand, said to me: "Fear not; it is the *Voice of the Eternal calling to Humanity*. Behold the *Breath of the Unity* rising to the *Spirit World* and casting aside the *shackles of the Material World!*"

When the vision had faded away I followed my Guide to the last Chamber on this elevated Level of the Tower, and it was the Twenty-first in Number.

The Twentieth-First Chamber

Here there appeared to me a *young man riding on a fine horse*, and with *eyes burning with desire* he gazed steadfastly at a *young girl who danced before him glorious in her nakedness*, and her hair was adorned with garlands of roses. By his side an *old hag* hobbled along, *holding his stirrup with one hand*, while *she held an hour-glass in the other*, in which I saw that the sand was fast running out. As I looked I saw of a sudden a deep precipice ahead, and at that moment a *hideous dog* rushed forth and bit the legs of the horse to urge him on his career. As the rider grew closer to the precipice, the young girl who danced before him changed in my sight, and the colour in her cheek changed into the *waxen hue of Death*, while the petals of the *roses on her head* shriveled and fell to the ground, and I saw her hair spreading out across the sky like the grey threads of a spider's web. Then the young man, having no power to check the fury of his steed, passed away and was *lost in the abyss*.

¹ Israfil (Arabic: اسرافل, translit. Isrāfil, lit. 'The Burning One,' alternate spellings: Israfel, Esrafil) is the *angel of the trumpet* in Islam... though unnamed in the Qur'an and is the alternative name of the Arch-Angel Uriel for the Jewish people. Along with Mikhail, Jibrail and Azrael, he is one of the four Islamic archangels. Israfil will blow the trumpet from a holy rock in Jerusalem to announce the *Day of Resurrection*. The trumpet is constantly poised at his lips, ready to be blown when God so orders. In Judeo-Christian biblical literature, Raphael is the counterpart of Israfil.

According to Edgar Allan Poe, the angel Israfil, whose heart-strings are a lute, has the sweetest voice of all God's creatures.

While my heart was heavy with pity for this young man, I heard my Guide saying to me: "Watch and behold!"

Again a *young man* appeared to me, and he was *clad in armour*, and in his hand was a *goodly spear*. Wild and dangerous beasts I saw striding across his path, but he looked neither to the right hand nor to the left hand, but with the *power of his spear* he drove them away. And I saw him begin the *ascent of a steep mountain full of obstacles*, but they seemed to cede before him, and as he reached the summit the sun shone forth illuminating his armour, and in the glory of that light the vision faded from my sight.

Then my Guide said to me: "In the First Chamber on this Level of the Tower thou sawest the *Divine Spirit rising through Matter to the Human World*. In the next Chamber thou wast shown the *rise of the Divine Spirit from the Human World to the Spiritual World*. Now this is the meaning of what thou hast seen in this Chamber. In the World in which thou livest *an Equilibrium existeth between Matter and the Divine Spirit*. Now in the heart of each man a point lieth hid on which this Equilibrium is poised, and this point is the *Mystery of Individuality*, which hath the power of turning the balance to the right hand or to the left hand, towards *Matter which leadeth to the Abyss*, or towards the *Divine Spirit which accelerates the moment of Reunion with the Unity*. Woe unto him therefore who in the Human World letteth the *idleness of one hour* impair the power of his Individuality to turn the balance towards the Light."

Then my Guide led me without the Chamber, and said to me: "All have I shown thee, yet one Chamber remaineth."

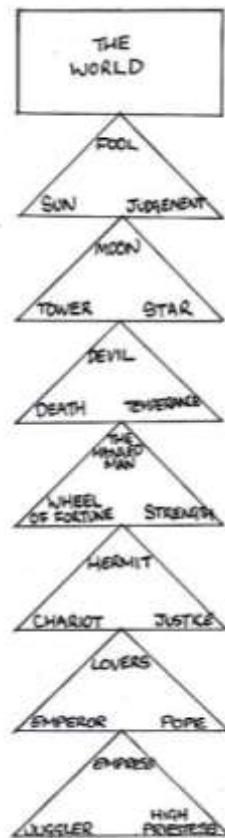
I said to him: "Are my eyes worthy to see what is therein?"

He replied: "If thou desirest to see, thou must rise to it alone."

The Highest Pinnacle

Then he pointed the way to a steep and tortuous flight of steps which led to the *highest pinnacle of the Tower*; these with toil and pain I began to ascend alone, and when I had reached to a great height I saw before me the *entrance to a Chamber closed by a heavy Veil*. I pushed it aside and penetrated within, and when the Veil had fallen back behind me it seemed to me that the *gravestone had fallen upon the grave*, and that I was *severed for ever from the World of Humanity*. A feeling of *solitude* crept upon me and a desire to pray, and kneeling down I worshipped *the Unknown*, seeking for *Illumination*, and by degrees the *knowledge of the things which I had seen* increased within me, and when I lifted up my eyes I saw that the Chamber in which I was formed like *an Ellipse*, and that in the centre thereof a *Figure sat upon a Throne, neither Man nor Woman, but - Humanity in the Womb of Time - the Ellipse of the Absolute*. And as I gazed and marveled, I saw a *Mystic Flower* at the summit of the Chamber open its *four great petals*, on each of which a Sign was burnt in fire, and from the depths of the Flower *three rays of light* descended

upon the Figure beneath illuminating it with splendour, so that I saw the *overpowering serenity* of its face - ever youthful - on which no wrinkle was writ. Then the Figure crossed its hands, so that forefinger was extended against forefinger, and with the tips of the forefingers it touched its lips, placing thereon the *Seal of Silence*. Then my soul grew bewildered with the beauty of that face, and I covered myself with my hands, and when again I opened my eyes I felt the breath of dawn upon my face, and I heard the lark singing above, and the joy of calm was in my heart, and the morning star shone in all its glory above the *Solitude of the Desert*.



Of which more will be said later in the forthcoming paper,
"Quabbalistic Curiosities: Fibonacci Numbers, Platonic Solids, Prime
Numbers and Vortex Based Mathematics."





"King Lear and the fool in a storm"

Illustrator: John Gilbert

Engraver: Dalziel Brothers

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The Mystic Tower

INDEX

Words and Phrases

Cross-Referenced

A

absolute Absolute 8
 Absolute, Ellipse of the 11
 Absolute, Realization of the 8
 Abyss 10
 abyss, lost in the 10
 Abyss, Matter which leadeth to the 11
 Abyss of Darkness, Breath of the Unity descending
 towards the 10
 Abyss of Negation, ultimate descent of the Spirit of
 the Unity into the depths of the 10
 ascetic 7
 ascetic Dervish 7
 aged Dervish 8
 aged King 7
 Angel 7, 9
 See *face of the Angel, Wings of Angels*
 Angel who poured out of a pitcher into a receiver
 beneath the Water of Life, an 9
 Angel of Death 7, 10
 Angel of Death, Azrael - the 10
 Angel of Life 7
 angel of the trumpet 10n.
 Arch-Angel 10n.
 Azrael 10n.
 Esrafil 10n.
 Israfil 10n.
 Jibrail 10n.
 Mikhail 10n.
 Raphael 10n.
 Uriel 10n.
 armour, he was clad in 11
 armour, sun shone forth illuminating his 11
 arrow, whizper of an 8
 ascent of a steep mountain full of obstacles 11
 axis, a Circle turning upon visible 8
 Azrael - the Angel of Death 10
 See *Arch-Angel*

B

- balance 8, 11
- balance between opposing Forces, the 8
- balance to the right hand or to the left hand, power of turning the 11
- balance towards the Light, power of *his* Individuality to turn the 11
- base metal, which seems gold in the World I will turn it into 9
- basket, he mowed down the flowers and threw them into the 9
- battlements parted asunder, the 9
- beast 10
 - beast [struggling] against wild beast, wild 10
- Beast of Evil 9
- beasts, Wild and dangerous 11
- beautiful Vision 10
- beauty, 7, 11
 - beauty of her face 7
 - beauty of that face, soul grew bewildered with the 11
- Beauty of the Manifestation of the Unity 8
- Between Man and Nature a permanent struggle exist 8
- bewildered with the beauty of that face, my soul grew 11
- body, Man who was Spiritual has entered the World and put on the burden of the material 9
- Body of Man, Spirit into the 10
- bond of Reunion between man created and the Breath from which his creation proceeded 8

bondage in which he is placed, through me cometh to
man the Courage to struggle against the 10
book closed, great 7
Book of Knowledge 7
bow of Power 8
Breath from which his creation proceeded, bond of
Reunion between man created and the 8
breath of dawn upon my face, the 11
Breath of Spring 9
Breath of the Unity rising to the Spirit World 10
Breath of the Unity descending towards the Abyss of
Darkness 10
burden of the material body, Man who was Spiritual
has entered the World and put on the 9
Burial Place of Humanity 10
Burning One, The 10n.

C

- calm was in my heart, the joy of 11
- chamber 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
 - Chamber closed by a heavy Veil, a 11
 - Chamber of Despair 10
 - Chamber of Equilibrium 8
 - Chaos in the World, Realm of 10
 - Chaos of the Material World, raising the Spirit of the
 - Eternal through the 10
 - child 7, 10
 - Childhood of Man 7
 - children 7
 - children of men 10
 - children of men, youths and maidens 10
 - Circle is the Equilibrium without which there would be
 - no Manifestation of the Unity, the 8
 - Circle of Evil 9
 - Circle turning upon no visible axis, a 8
 - circular colonnade 7
 - cloud, a thunderbolt descending from a 9
 - colonnade 7.

See *circular colonnade*
complete darkness 9
conception of justice 9
condensation, a point of 10
consciousness of the Unknown 7
Conqueror, Man 8
conqueror, radiant like a 8
Courage to struggle against the bondage in which he is
placed, through me cometh to man the 10
craving in humility of spirit for illumination 7
Created World, Good and Evil in the 8
Creation createth, Spirit of 8
Creator, Man as the Emblem of the 8
creature in the World, individual 9
crescent moon at top, stately Woman deeply veiled,
wearing [] a crown with the 7
Cross 9
Crown of Authority 7
crown with the crescent moon at top, stately Woman
deeply veiled, wearing [] a 7
crystal of salt suspended in the Ocean, a pure 10
cycle of human life 7

D

dangerous beasts, Wild and 11
darkness 7, 8, 9, 10
 See *Abyss of Darkness, complete darkness,*
 Spirit of Darkness, utter darkness
darkness, utter 10
Darkness 7, 10
 Darkness, Breath of the Unity descending towards
 the Abyss of 10

Darkness, opposition of the Light and the 7
 Darkness, suspended between the Light and the 7
 darkness of Unreality 7
 dawn upon my face, the breath of 11
 Day of Resurrection 10n.
 Compare *grave-clothes*, the rending of their 10;
 dead rising, the 10
 dead rising, the 10
 Death 9
 Death, Azrael - the Angel of 10
 Death there could be no Life, without 9
 Death, waxen hue of 10
 Death hath no terrors 9
 Death is the Key which opens unto Man a further stage
 on the Path of the Manifestation of the Unity 9
 Dervish 7, 8, 9
 Dervish, the humble hood of the 9
 Desert, Solitude of the 11
 desire 7, 10, 11
 desire to learn 7
 desire to pray 11
 Despair, Chamber of 10
 despondency, a Vision which filled my Soul with 10
 Destruction destroyeth, Spirit of 8
 determination 7
 diadem of seven stars, her golden tresses were crowned
 with a 9
 Divine Love 8
 Divine Love, glow of 8
 Divine Spirit 11
 Divine Spirit rising through Matter to the Human
 World 11
 Divine Spirit which accelerates the moment of
 Reunion with the Unity 11
 Divine Spirit, an Equilibrium existeth between
 Matter and the 11
 Divine Spirit from the Human World to the
 Spiritual World, rise of the 11
 dog, a hideous 10
 door 7
 See *small and hidden door*
 Dragon beneath me, I curb the 9
 Dragon's Ring, fatal power of the 9

E

Eagle 7
 Earth 9, 10
 Earth, pure Water of the 9
 Earth, reptiles of the 10
 Ellipse 11
 Ellipse of the Absolute 11
 Emblem of the Creator, Man as the 8
 Emblem of Temperance 9
 entrance 7, 8, 11
 Entrance Gate 7
 envy in his heart 7
 Equilibrium 8
 Equilibrium without which there would be no
 Manifestation of the Unity, the Circle is the 8
 Equilibrium existeth between Matter and the Divine
 Spirit, an 11
 Equilibrium, Chamber of 8
 Equilibrium, Sign of 8
Esrafil 10n.
 See *Arch-Angel*
 Eternal 7, 9, 10
 Eternal, Nature illuminated by the Spirit of the 9
 Eternal, raising the Spirit of the 10
 Eternal calling to Humanity, Voice of the 10
 Eternal Unity 7
 Eternal Youth of Nature 10

Bouchard, *li Exōtile*

Eternity 8, 9
 Eternity, sleep of 9
 Eternity, Symbol of 8
Evil 8, 9
 Evil, Beast of 9
 Evil, Circle of 9
 Evil in the Created World, Good and 8
 Evil is possible, from Good the descent to 8
 Evil, so descendeth the Spirit of 8
 Evil the ascent to Good is possible, from 8
 Evil, the Mantle of Protection which shall ward off 8
existence 7, 9
 See *human existence, joy of existence*
existence of Individuality 9
 existence of Individuality, In the World in which thou livest, the mind perceiveth the 9
exuberance of youth 7
eye 7, 8, 9
eye of man 8
 Eye of a Spiritual Being 8
 Eye of the World 8
eyes 8, 9, 10, 11
 eyes burning with desire 10

F

face 7, 9, 11
 beauty of her face 7
 face, the breath of dawn upon my 11
 face, Majesty of his 8
 face, youth with vicious 7
 face of a man 9
 face of the Angel 7
 face-to-face 8
 fatal power of the Dragon's Ring 9
 fear, a voice which had the ring of silver without tremor and without 9
 feeling of solitude crept upon me, a 11
Field of Solitude 10
 Figure sat upon a Throne, neither Man nor Woman 11
 fire on each [petal] of which a Sign was burnt in 11
Flower, a Mystic 11
 Refer to *four great petals*
flowers 9, 10
 flowers, a green meadow enameled with the glory of 9
 flowers and threw them into the basket, he mowed down the 9
 flowers, luxuriant 9
 flowers, the green meadow filled with 9
 flowers, youths and maidens, played among the 10
flowers of every hue 10
 Forces, the balance between opposing 8
 Fountain of Immortality 10
 four great petals 11
 from the depths of the Flower three rays of light descended 11

G

garden 7, 10
 See *lovely Garden*
garden, sunshine of the pleasant 7
Gate 7
 Gate of the Temple 7
 Gateway of the Temple 7
 germ of Vitality 9
 gift, precious 8
 gift of Life 10
 girl who danced, a young 10
 gloom 9, 10
 gloom, profundity of the 9
 glorious in her nakedness 10
 glory of the Light 10
 Glory of the Sun have I absorbed in my golden tresses, The 10
 glow of Divine Love 8
God 8
 God, so ascendeth the Spirit of 8
 God by striving to act according to his lights in the World, man who had sought for 7
 God through the Spirit, man who had sought for 7

God's Law, my Law shall be 8
 gold 9
 gold in the World I will turn it into base metal, which seems 9
 golden hair of youth 9
 golden tresses, The Glory of the Sun have I absorbed in my 10
 golden tresses were crowned with a diadem of seven stars, her 9
Good 8
 Good and Evil in the Created World 8
 Good the descent to Evil is possible, from 8
 Good is possible, from Evil the ascent to 8
grave, the gravestone had fallen upon the 11
 grave-clothes, the rending of their 10
 gravestone had fallen upon the grave, the 11
Guide, my 7, 8, 9, 10, 11

H

hag, an old 10
 hair of youth, golden 9
 hand or to the left hand, power of turning the balance to the right 11
 harp in the stillness of the night, music of a 10
 heart 7, 8, 11
 heart, envy in his 7
 heart, the joy of calm was in my 11
 heart was heavy with pity, my 11
 heart is pure, my 9
 heart thirsteth for Knowledge 7
 hidden door, small and 7
 Holder of Power 8
 Holy Sanctuary 7
 hour-glass 10
 hope 10
 Hope in the World, Voice of 10
 Hope of Redemption 10
 Hope of Redemption, into his fallen Soul I breathe the 10
 horse, young man riding on a fine 10
 human existence 7
 See *vanity of human existence*

human eye 7
human figures 7
human knowledge, limits of 7
human life 7
 See *cycle of human life*
human world 11
 Human World to the Spiritual World, rise of the Divine Spirit from the 11
 See *Divine Spirit rising through Matter to the Human World*
Humanity 7, 8, 10
 See *Solvent of Humanity, World of Humanity*
 Humanity, Burial Place of 10
 Humanity, Manifestation of 10
 Humanity, outer shell of 7
 Humanity, Voice of the Eternal calling to 10
 Humanity in the Womb of Time 11
 humility of spirit for illumination, craving in 7

I

icy blast chilled my Soul 9
 idleness of one hour 11
 illuminated by the Spirit of the Eternal, Nature 9
 illuminated only by the pale and sickly light of the Moon 10
 illuminates my Path, lamp which 8
 illuminating his armour, sun shone forth 11
 illuminating it with splendour 11
 illumination 7, 11
 illumination, craving in humility of spirit for 7
 Illumination, seeking for 11
 Immortality, Fountain of 10
 incarnated in the World which lieth open unto thy senses 9
 incessant action of Time, Symbol of the 8
 individual creature in the World, the 9
 Individuality, existence of 9
 See *Mystery of Individuality*

Individuality to turn the balance towards the Light, the power of his 11
 Iness moveth, the World in which 8
 Intelligence 7
 Israfel, voice of 10
Israfil 10n.
 See *Arch-Angel*
 Also called *Isrāfil* - or *Raphael*

J

Jibrail 10n.
 See *Arch-Angel*
Journey of Life 7
 joy of calm was in my heart, the 11
 joy of existence 9
 justice, conception of 9
 Justice, Sign of the Spirit of 8

K

Key which opens unto Man a further stage on the Path of the Manifestation of the Unity, Death is the 9
King 7, 8
 See *aged King, young king*
King of this World 8
King of this World, not a 8
King upon his throne 8
 Kingdom of the Passions let loose 10
 kneeling down I worshipped the Unknown 11
Knowledge 7, 10, 11
 See *Book of Knowledge, human knowledge, Temple of Human Knowledge*
 Knowledge, heart thirsteth for 7
 knowledge, limits of human 7
 Knowledge of the Principles of the Universe 10
 Knowledge of the Spirit of Preservation 10
 Knowledge of the World of Facts 10
 knowledge of the things which I had seen 11
 Known 9
 See *Link between the Known and the Unknown*

L

lamp which illuminates my Path 8
Law of the Spirit, Voice of the 8
Law of the World 8
 Law shall be God's Law, my 8
 Law, Sign of the Revealed 9
 Law, World of 10
 left hand, power of turning the balance to the right hand or to the 11
life 7, 9, 10
 See *Angel of Life, gift of Life, Journey of Life, Spirit of Life, waste of Life, Water of Life*
 life, cycle of human 7
 Life, Stagnation is the Negation of 9
 Life, without Death there could be no 9
 light descended from the depths of the Flower three rays of 11
Light 7, 8, 10, 11
 See *soul-inspiring light*
 Light and the Darkness, opposition of the 7
 Light and the Darkness, suspended between the 7
 Light, glory of the 10
 light of the Moon, illuminated only by the pale and sickly 10
 Light, Path of 8
 Light, power of his Individuality to turn the balance towards the 11
 limits of Human Knowledge 7
 Link between the Known and the Unknown 9
 loneliness 7
 lost in the abyss 10
Love 7, 8
 See *Divine Love, Star of Love*
 Love, glow of Divine 8
 Love reaches the Soul, bringing Man and Woman to the completion of their Manifest Destinies 8
 lovely Garden 10
 lovely maiden 9, 10
 luminosity, a vivifying 10

Bouchard, *li Exōüile*

M

maiden 7, 9, 10
 See *Vision of a lovely maiden*
 maidens, youths and 10
 majestic vision of a man 8
 Majesty of his face 8
 Majesty, a Woman was seated, clothed in 7
 Man 7, 8, 9, 10
 man created and the Breath from which his creation proceeded, bond of Reunion between 8
 Man, Spirit into the Body of 10
 Man, Link between the Unity and 7
 Man and Nature a permanent struggle exist, Between 8
 Man and Woman to the completion of their Manifest Destinies, Love reaches the Soul, bringing 8
 Man as the Emblem of the Creator 8
 Man Conqueror 8
 man was struggling against man, and wild beast against wild beast 10
 man who had sought for God by striving to act according to his lights in the World 7
 man who had sought for God through the Spirit 7
 Man who was Spiritual has entered the World and put on the burden of the material body 9
 man's will struggleth in vain 9
 Manifest Destinies, Love reaches the Soul, bringing Man and Woman to the completion of their 8
 Manifestation of Humanity 10
 Manifestation of the Unity 8
 Manifestation of the Unity, the Circle is the Equilibrium without which there would be no 8
 Manifestation of the Unity, Beauty of the 8
 Manifestation of the Unity, Death is the Key which opens unto Man a further stage on the Path of the 9
 Mantle of Protection 8, 9
 Mantle of Protection, Round my Soul have I drawn the 8
 master 7, 9
 Master of the Tower 9
 material body, Man who was Spiritual has entered the World and put on the burden of the 9
 Material World 9, 10
 Material World, path through the 9
 Material World, shackles of the 10
 Material World, raising the Spirit of the Eternal through the Chaos of the 10
 Matter 10,, 11
 See *Triumph of Matter*
 Matter absorbing the Spirit 11
 Matter and the Divine Spirit, an Equilibrium existeth between 11
 Matter, mountain of 10
 Matter absorbing the Spirit 10
 Matter were piled upon my Soul to crush it, a mountain of 10
 Matter which leadeth to the Abyss 11
 meadow 9
 meadow enameled with the glory of flowers, a green 9
 meadow, A luxuriant 9
 meadow filled with flowers, the green 9
 metal, which seems gold in the World I will turn it into base 9
 Mikhail 10n.
 See *Arch-Angel*
 mist, a shapeless 10
 Moon, illuminated only by the pale and sickly light of the 10
 mountain of Matter were piled upon my Soul to crush it, a 10
 mountain full of obstacles, ascent of a steep 11
 music of a harp in the stillness of the night 10
 mysterious World 7
 Mystery of Individuality 11
 Mystic Flower, a 11
 Mystic Sign 8
 mystic symbol of the Unity 7

N

nakedness, glorious in her 10
 Nature 8, 10

Nature, Eternal Youth of 10
 Nature illuminated by the Spirit of the Eternal 8
 Nature, more than 8
 Negation 9, 10
 Negation of Life, Stagnation is the 9
 Negation, ultimate descent of the Spirit of the Unity into the depths of the Abyss of 10
 neither Man nor Woman, a Figure sat upon a Throne 11
 night, music of a harp in the stillness of the 10
 no power, young man, having 10
 noble woman, that I may learn, teach me, thou 7

O

obscurity, complete 11
 obstacles, ascent of a steep mountain full of 11
 Ocean, a pure crystal of salt suspended in the 10
 old age 9
 old hag 10
 old man 7, 8
 on each [petal] of which a Sign was burnt in fire 11
 opposing Forces, the balance between 8
 opposition of the Light and the Darkness 7
 outer shell of Humanity 7
 overpowering serenity 11

P

Passive 7
 path 8, 9, 11
 Path, lamp which illuminates my 8
 Path of the Manifestation of the Unity, Death is the Key which opens unto Man a further stage on the 9
 Path of Light 8
 Path of Reunion 9
 path through the Material World 9
 petals, four great 11
 Refer to on each of which a Sign was burnt in fire, from the depths of the Flower three rays of light descended
 pinions 10
 pinnacle of the Tower, highest 11
 pity, my heart was heavy with 11
 Poe, Edgar Allen 10n.
 possession of the World 7
 power 7
 See *bowl of Power, Holder of Power, wand of Power*
 Also see *overpowering serenity*
 Power, my Sceptre is the sign of 8
 power of his Individuality to turn the balance towards the Light, the 11
 power of the Dragon's Ring, fatal 9
 power young man, having no 10
 power of his Individuality to turn the balance towards the Light 11
 power of his spear 11
 Power of the Sword 8
 power of turning the balance to the right hand or to the left hand 11
 power to lift my veil 7
 pray, desire to 11
 prayer 7, 11
 prayer, I poured my Soul out in 11
 precious gift 8
 Preservation, Knowledge of the Spirit of 10
 Pride 9
 profundity of the gloom 9
 Promised Land 7
 Protection, Round my Soul have I drawn the Mantle of 8
 pure crystal of salt suspended in the Ocean, a 10
 pure Water of the Earth 9

Q

Qur'an 10n.

R

radiant like a conqueror 8

radiant in all the splendour of youth and strength 9
 Raphael 10n.
 See *Arch-Angel*
 Realization of the Absolute, 8
 Realm of Chaos in the World 10
 rebel against the Revealed Law 9
 Recipient 7
 Redemption, into his fallen Soul I breathe the Hope of 10
 representations of human figures 7
 reptiles of the Earth 10
 Resurrection, Day of 10n.
 Compare *grave-clothes, the rending of their 10; dead rising, the 10*
 Reunion 8, 9, 10, 11
 Reunion, Yearning for 10
 Reunion, Path of 9
 Reunion between man created and the Breath from which his creation proceeded, bond of 8
 Reunion with the Unity, Divine Spirit which accelerates the moment of 11
 Revealed Law 9
 Revealed Law, rebel against the 9
 Revealed Law, Sign of the 9
 right hand or to the left hand, power of turning the balance to the 11
 Ring, fatal power of the Dragon's 9
 rise of the Divine Spirit from the Human World to the Spiritual World 11
 rose 7
 roses, garlands of 10
 roses on her head 10

S

Sage 7, 9
 Sage of that Temple 7
 Satan 7
 salt 9, 10
 salt suspended in the Ocean, a pure crystal of 10
 Salt of the World 9
 Sanctuary, Holy 7
 Sceptre is the sign of Power, my 8
 Sceptre do I govern, with my 8
 Seal of Silence 11
 serenity, overpowering 11
 seven levels 7
 seven stars, a diadem of 9
 shackles of the Material World 10
 shapeless mist, a 10
 shapes of trees appearing, and flowers of every hue 10
 Sign 8, 9
 Sign was burnt in fire on each [petal] of which a 11
 Sign, Mystic 8
 sign of Power, my Sceptre is the 8
 Sign of Equilibrium 8
 Sign of the Fall 9
 Sign of the Revealed Law 9
 Sign of the Spirit of Justice 8
 Silence, Seal of 11
 silver without tremor and without fear, a voice which had the ring of 9
 sleep of Eternity 9
 small and hidden door 7
 softness of her voice 10
 solitude crept upon me, a feeling of 11
 Solitude, Field of 10
 Solvent of Humanity 9
 Solitude of the Desert 11
 Soul 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
 See, bringing Man and Woman to the completion of their Manifest Destinies
 soul grew bewildered with the beauty of that face 11
 Soul have I drawn the Mantle of Protection, Round my 8
 Soul I breathe the Hope of Redemption, into his fallen 10
 Soul, icy blast chilled my 9
 Soul, Love reaches the 8
 Soul out in prayer, I poured my 11
 Soul to crush it, a mountain of Matter were piled upon my 10

Bouchard, *li Exōûile*

Soul was so stirred, my 10
 Soul with despondency, a Vision which filled my 10
 Soul with elation, filled my 8
 soul-inspiring light 7
 Soul of Man 7
 Soul of the wanton 7
 Souls of Men 8
 sound of the trumpet 10
 spear, in his hand was a goodly 11
 spear, power of his 11
 spirit 7
 Spirit 8, 9, 10, 11
 Spirit, an Equilibrium existeth between Matter and the Divine 11
 Spirit, Matter absorbing the 10
 Spirit of Evil, so descendeth the 8
 Spirit of God, so ascendeth the 8
 Spirit of Justice, Sign of the 8
 Spirit of the Eternal, Nature illuminated by the 8
 Spirit of the Eternal, raising the 10
 Spirit of the Unity into the depths of the Abyss of Negation, ultimate descent of the 10
 Spirit of the Unity, Symbol of the 9
 Spirit rising through Matter to the Human World, Divine 11
 Spirit, strength lieth in the 9
 Spirit which accelerates the moment of Reunion with the Unity, Divine 11
 Spirit, Voice of the Law of the 8
 Spirit into the Body of Man 10
 Spirit of Creation createth 8
 Spirit of Darkness 8
 Spirit of Destruction destroyeth 8
 Spirit of God 8
 Spirit of Life 9
 Spirit of Light 8
 Spirit of Preservation, Knowledge of the 10
 Spirit of Stagnation 9
 Spirit of the Eternal through the Chaos of the Material World, raising the 10
 Spirit World 10
 See *Divine Spirit rising through Matter to the Human World*
 splendour of youth and strength, radiant in all the 8
 Spiritual has entered the World and put on the burden of the material body, Man who was 9
 Spiritual Being, Eye of a 8
 Spring, Breath of 9
 stag, a noble 8
 Stagnation is the Negation of Life 9
 Stagnation, Spirit of 9
 Strange Land 7
 Star of Love 7
 stars, a diadem of seven stars 9
 stars, her golden tresses were crowned with a diadem of seven 9
 steep and tortuous flight of steps, a 11
 stillness of the night, music of a harp in the 10
 strength 7, 8, 9
 strength, Tower of great 9
 strength lieth in the Spirit 9
 struggling against man, and wild beast against wild beast, man was 10
 Sun have I absorbed in my golden tresses, The Glory of the 10
 sunshine of the pleasant garden 7
 suspended between the Light and the Darkness 7
 Sword, Power of the 8
 Sword standing unsupported on the point of its hilt 8
 Symbol of Eternity 8
 Symbol of the incessant action of Time 8
 Symbol of the Spirit of the Unity 9
 symbol of the Unity, mystic 7

T

teach me, thou noble woman, that I may learn 7
 tears to weep, Vision inspired me with so great a terror that my eyes had no 10
 Temperance, Emblem of 9
 Temple 7
 Temple, Gate of the 7

Temple, Gateway of the 7
 Temple, Sage of that 7
 Temple of Human Knowledge 7
 termination of the First and the Second 7
 Terror of the World 9
 terrors, Death hath no 9
 throne 7, 8, 11
 See *Figure sat upon a Throne, neither Man nor Woman*
 throne, a man seated upon a 8
 throne, King upon his 8
 throne of the King 7
 throne upon which a Woman was seated, clothed in Majesty 7
 thorn 7
 three rays of light descended from the depths of the Flower 11
 thunderbolt descending from a cloud, a 9
 Time 8, 11
 Time, Humanity in the Womb of 11
 Time, Symbol of the incessant action of 8
 Tower 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
 See *Master of the Tower, triangular Tower*
 Tower, highest pinnacle of the 11
 Tower, the mighty 9
 Tower, the ruined 9
 Tower of great strength 9
 tresses 10
 tresses, The Glory of the Sun have I absorbed in my golden 10
 tresses were crowned with a diadem of seven stars, her golden 9
 triangle 9
 triangular Tower 7
 Triumph of Matter 10
 trumpet 10n.
 trumpet, sound of the 10

U

unknown 7, 9, 11
 Unknown, consciousness of the 7
 Unknown, kneeling down I worshipped the 11
 Unknown, Link between the Known and the 9
 unknown World 7
 Uriel 10n.
 See *Arch-Angel*
 unity 7, 8, 9, 10
 Unity and Man, Link between the 7
 Unity, Beauty of the Manifestation of the 8
 Unity, Death is the Key which opens unto Man a further stage on the Path of the Manifestation of the 9
 Unity descending towards the Abyss of Darkness, Breath of the 10
 Unity, Divine Spirit which accelerates the moment of Reunion with the 11
 Unity into the depths of the Abyss of Negation, ultimate descent of the Spirit of the 10
 Unity, Manifestation of the 8
 Unity, mystic symbol of the 7
 Unity nothing is created, nothing is destroyed, in the 9
 Unity, reflection of the 7
 Unity rising to the Spirit World, Breath of the 10
 Unity, Symbol of the Spirit of the 9
 Unity, will of the 8
 Unity Eternal 7
 Unreality, darkness of 7
 utter darkness 10

V

vanity of human existence 7
 veil 7, 8, 11
 Veil, a Chamber closed by a heavy 11
 vision 8
 vision of a man, majestic 8
 Vision 9, 10
 Vision, beautiful 10
 Vision of a lovely maiden 9
 Vision inspired me with so great a terror that my eyes had no tears to weep 10

voice 8, 9, 10
 Voice ceased, the 9
 Voice replied, a 9
 voice, softness of her 10
 voice of Israel 10
 voice which had the ring of silver without tremor and without fear, a 9
 Voice of the Eternal calling to Humanity 10
 Voice of Hope in the World 10
 Voice of the Law of the Spirit 8
 Vision which filled my Soul with despondency, a 10
 Vitality, germ of 9

W

wand of Power 10
 wanton, Soul of the 7
 waste of Life 10
 Water of Life 9
 Water of Life, an Angel who poured out of a pitcher into a receiver beneath the 9
 Water of the Earth, pure 9
 waxen hue of Death 10
 whisper of an arrow 8
 Wild and dangerous beasts 11
 wild beast [struggling] against wild beast 10
 will of the Unity 8
 will struggled in vain, man's 9
 willing, I am 7
 wings around his form, he drew his great 10
 Wings of Angels 7
 Wisdom 8
 world 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
 See *Eye of the World, King of this World, Law of the World, Material World, mysterious World, Salt of the World, Spirit World, Terror of the World, Voice of Hope in the World*

Good and Evil in the Created World 8

World, incarnated in the 9
 World to the Spiritual World, rise of the Divine Spirit from the Human 11
 World, possession of the 7
 World, Realm of Chaos in the 10
 World of Facts, Knowledge of the 10
 World of Humanity 11
 World of Law 10
 World of Youth 7
 woman, that I may learn, teach me, thou noble 7
 Woman [] clothed in Majesty, and wearing the Crown of Authority 7
 Woman deeply veiled, wearing [] a crown with the crescent moon at top, stately 7
 Womb is Man conceived, in my 8
 Womb of Time, Humanity in the 11
 worshipped the Unknown, kneeling down I 11

X

Yearning for Reunion 10
 young King 7
 young girl who danced, a 10
 young man 10, 11
 young man, having no power 10
 young man riding on a fine horse 10
 youth 7, 9
 See *Eternal Youth of Nature*
 youth, exuberance of 7
 youth, golden hair of 9
 youth and strength, splendour of 8
 youth with vicious face 7
 youthful, ever 11
 youths and maidens 10
 youths and maidens, children of men 10
 youths and maidens, played among the flowers 10

Z

Back Cover Illustration
“Christ Triumphant Over Death” by Schelte Adams Bolswert

